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## Philosophical Midwifery as Philosophical Practice and the Struggle for Excellence in Homer

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The epic works of Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey, have been studied and pondered for nearly 2,800 years not only for their masterly drama and their finely wrought verses, but for depth of insight into the human condition and the portrayal of the divine as pantheistic. The fundamental themes of these two classic works are interwoven and form a union of counter balancing divine and human forces.

In the Odyssey we are told that the terrible destruction and ruin brought about by the Trojan War was all the work of God, Zeus, and was to be sung for the future ages of man, and the Iliad opens as a song announcing that the furious anger of Achilles is an expression of the will of God, Zeus.

For our part we learn from the Iliad how Achilles overcame his perilous plight to become a model for the highest excellence, and in the Odyssey (bk.24; 200) how Penelope's steadfast loyalty and steadfast integrity to the vision of her heart became the song that the Gods sang for the benefit of mankind, (bk.24, 200). Together, male and female, an ideal was crafted for the benefit of mankind. However, of these three issues this paper will focus only on Homer's Iliad and leave for another time the other two issues.

Our goal will be to show that Homer possessed not only a depth of insight into the human condition superior to that of contemporary scientific psychology, but one that also challenges the presumed superiority of modernism. In addition, we must see why this superiority was not recognized until recently. Simply, it had to await the development of a way of understanding akin to Homer, an understanding that did not stray from the canons of scientific method, and that culminated in a dialectical method revealing that in the highest pursuit of excellence the anagogic dimension emerges. This understanding is a philosophical method that is called philosophical midwifery; it is an adaptation of Socratic midwifery by Dr. Pierre Grimes. A validation of this method has been done by Dr. Regina Uliana. As a form of philosophical practice it assists those who seek excellence in their lives, through discovering the root cause of their problems derived from false beliefs that were learned from childhood experiences.

Our comparative study of philosophical midwifery and Homer's Iliad will show that the one can be mapped over the other so that either could be used as a model for reaching excellence, and in that pursuit participate in the anagogic path to the divine, thereby revealing the astonishing depth of Homeric thought. However we must first explore why philosophical midwifery is Platonic, how the principle ideas of philosophical midwifery can be found in Homer, and on what basis we can make the claim that there is an anagogic level to Homer consistent with philosophical midwifery.

The shadows on the wall in Plato's Allegory of the Cave and the Upper World are the man made icons of man, -andriantas-, that we have been misled to believe are our ideals, for they are merely shadows of justice flickering on the wall of the cave. The craft that made and support these images is the work of sophistry. The fundamental issue is to discover how we persuaded ourselves to believe false beliefs about our own selves. Challenging such sophistry is the time-honored goal of Platonic philosophy and it is this that makes Philosophical Midwifery a major part of a philosophy whose goals are at once spiritual and rational.

The good life is open to all through the participation in mind for this is what illumines our struggle to achieve our highest and most profound excellence, arete. It is natural to encounter difficulties in this struggle and, indeed, they must be overcome if excellence we seek is to be achieved, but these difficulties are termed problems, or the pathologos, only if they block one from achieving that excellence. These blocks, or the pathologos, have their roots in the false beliefs we have,

unknowingly, accepted as true about ourselves and about the nature of reality. Since they are inimical to and irreconcilable with one's higher and more profound goals they are the causes of our failure in life. They function as a monad in that they link with others, becoming a key component of the image of the self, and they manifest themselves cyclically throughout one's life. Since we have convinced ourselves that these images are true, we have effectively blocked ourselves from our own meaningful goals. Thus, we can say that we have trapped and fettered ourselves in the cave of our own minds.

To free ourselves of such false beliefs it is essential to discover what made them believable, to learn the conditions that were necessary for us to assume they were true and how they were transmitted to us. Further, we need to discover what maintains their influence into the present, and, finally, see what ends their strange power over us. These are the goals of Philosophical Midwifery, which is an adaptation of the Socratic art, which is a rational method for resolving those kinds of problems and as such constitutes a new paradigm for understanding human problems.

Philosophical Midwifery (PM), as a mode of Philosophical Practice, is a non-interpretive dialogical exploration that has been taught and practiced for overcoming the blocks in the struggle to achieve excellence. The method of PM, surfacing these unsuspected pathologos-beliefs, brings us to discover what factors made them believable, and what maintains them into our present. In recognizing the way pathologos beliefs function, their dissolution follows. As a result PM puts an end to the suspicion that mind is incapable of understanding its own problems. PM was the subject of a validation study, which concluded that the long held belief that a purely rational approach is incapable of raising significant levels of emotionalized behavior and of being empirically verified must be rejected. The study affirmed that its methods could bring about fundamental changes in the human psyche without being psychological, since psychology, according to its DSM-IV, does not include unsuspected learned beliefs as causes of psychogenic behavior.

From the viewpoint of Philosophical Midwifery the class of human problems that manifest themselves in the pursuit of one's highest goals are the consequences of the family-clan subjecting a child to a crisis in authority which creates the condition for the youth to adopt a false image of themselves. The timing of the imposition of the false image, or pathologos, is when the child innocently and in an open receptive state of mind violates or goes beyond the boundary the family-clan

has set for themselves and their place in the world. The transmission scenes of the pathologos are carefully selected so that parental figures, or their surrogates, can give their most convincing appearance of being just, sincere, caring, and knowing, which creates in the child the model for love, caring, and knowing. The function of the transmission scene is to bring the subject to voluntarily forfeit their own personal goals and accept the family-clan boundary as more significant and of higher value. In accepting this limitation of their exercise of freedom the child plays out their role within the family-clan goals. The volition of the child is captured and the subjugation is complete as the child, unknowingly, exchanges their newly found sense of freedom for the sense of belonging to the clan. The price they pay is their loss of freedom and with it their own experience of integrity. There is no need for violence or punishment in these scenes, since they are carefully designed only to convince the child to abandon their own direction and to live within the confines of acceptable belief.

In sharing their fundamental concerns the parental figures must appear their noblest and most sincere so that the picture they present of themselves is one of being virtuous, of being just. When those we respect and identify with are willing to appear before us as most virtuous and just, having seen nothing more noble than this, we accept that as our ideal. In seeing those we love sharing with us what they love and what they have learned about life we believe the truth of what they say and we are converted to their beliefs. The child forfeits their freedom, and assumes a role within the limits of the family image and defends it loyally and is willing to sacrifice all for that shadow of justice. Curiously, we can see through these explorations that the origin of vice lies in modeling oneself after this image of justice, so in making others pay dearly for threatening the status of that belief one appears just. However, in some deep way the child always knows that they have been compromised and that is the origin of the sullen rage against authority. Thus, while the child gains acceptance within the family-clan structure, the price the child pays is not to question the process since the examination of its origins would surface the grounds of its acceptance. Agreeing, if even implicitly, to the curtailing of the mind from any examination of this belief structure becomes an avoidance and fear of the cultivation of the mind.

The loyalty to the pathologos belief becomes a badge of honor and whenever circumstances are sufficiently parallel, or analogous, to what was transmitted in these past learned scenes the believer will defend vigorously, believing it to be an attack against their own cherished ideal of justice. It is experienced as an affront

against their honor, and it justifies their seeking for ruinous revenge. The suffering, the grief, and turmoil that spins out from revenge is the cycle that begins with anger. It is through the exploration of the dynamics of the cycle of anger that we can gain insight and understanding of pathologos problems.

When the believer is brought to see the full consequences of their pathologos-belief, they experience a deep and profound shock. If the believer can then bring themselves to see that the tragic circumstances of their life was the consequence of blindly adhering to their false belief then it is possible for them to emerge from the shadows of belief and test their understanding in those very situations that previously blocked them. Again, if this is achieved the believer becomes a new person with a new vision of life. This is the story of Achilles because he was able to move out of the fury and turmoil of rage and revenge, and into a mindful excellence.

Other classical authors have recognized that undermining a child's self-image and their belief system brings about social and individual chaos. In Plato's Republic, the fall of the aristocratic state is caused by members of the ruling family undermining the child's self image and his perception of his father. While Plato does not offer any insight into why such sophistry became believable to the child, he does capture the circumstances of the transmission of that idea. Indeed, one of the central philosophical issues explored in the dialogues of Plato is the unmasking of the sophist as a pretender to knowledge. As the high point of the sophist's art is fashioning irrational beliefs so as to appear acceptable to the believer, as if they are rational and true, so the unmasking of the sophist as a pretender to knowledge falls within the art of the philosopher. There are few authors who have been able to depict with sufficient scope and precision the dynamics of belief formation so that others can recognize the rationality behind this little understood phenomena. However, we shall see that Homer's work does have the scope and precision we require since the goal of his Iliad is to understand the wrath of Achilles and to understand how that anger fulfills the will of Zeus. Homer brings us to see that behind Achilles' anger it is possible to understand the dynamics of the origin and dissolution of his ruinous false beliefs about himself. He traces the origin of his fury to his early learning experiences, and once Achilles was able to reject the powerful influence of his early learned false beliefs he was able to become truly heroic and to achieve human excellence.

In choosing Achilles' problem to explore we are selecting a problem we all share, since similar dynamics as those behind Achilles' problem exhibit themselves

in our own lives as well, even though they may not take on the extreme form as they did with Achilles. For just as the blinding rage that Achilles felt over experiencing injustice kept him from seeing its destructive folly so too we are blinded by our own feelings of resentment and revenge over the injustices we have experienced in our own past. The perpetuation of these sullen grievances diminishes our capacity to enter into mindfulness.

In our analysis of Homer's *Iliad*, we will demonstrate that Homer's understanding of human nature is consistent with PM. We found that by applying this paradigm to those who explore human problems we can determine the level of rationality of their methods and work, both in the past and present. There is a particular and interesting challenge in applying these principles to Homer's *Iliad*, because we can be brought to see that in Achilles' struggle to overcome his blocks Homer not only traces nearly all the stages of uncovering and resolving problems outlined in philosophical midwifery, but he includes a stage that was overlooked prior to this study of Homer

We shall compare the principles of PM with Homer's *Iliad*. Following the methods of PM we shall describe Achilles' problem in terms of (1) the present situation that manifested the problem, (2) the pathologos state of mind, (3) the transmission scene, (4) dealing with the consequences of the pathologos problem, (5) reconciliation with oneself and Priam.

(1) The particular circumstance that manifested Achilles' problem began in the ninth year of the Achaeans' assault against Troy. Agamemnon, the general of the Achaeans, refused the ransom that Khryses, the priest of Apollo, offered him for the return of his daughter, Khryseis. Achilles, the commander of a legion of Myrmidons under Agamemnon, confronted him openly, taunted him, and ridiculed him for not giving back the girl and collecting the ransom. In retaliation for Achilles posturing as an equal with him and for having to return Khryseis, Agamemnon's forced Achilles to give up his own beloved wife, Briseis.. Achilles was furious at Agamemnon for being dishonored, for the loss of Briseis, and for being treated as an underling. Driven by the need for revenge he refused to fight and sat idly waiting for the destruction and slaughter of the Achaeans in battle. He planned on fleeing, deserting with his troops just before the final assault.

(2) In the pathologos state of mind there is the sense that one is protected and honored by one's identification with the pathologos. The parental figures or their surrogates each contribute to the development of the pathologos state of mind for it becomes the model for the behavior of the child through which they learn to

express love, honor, and power. In the acts of the pathologos drama, we note that the subject does not necessarily act out a mirror copy of the model, but rather the dynamics of that drama. The pathologos, the interpretation one makes from the transmission scene, is what frames the drama. The enactment of the PM drama will follow, or react to, the episodes regardless of who plays them out. For in the playing out of the drama it justifies the original transmission and its tradition is justified.

Achilles believes that his brief existence as a mortal was somewhat balanced or compensated for by the belief that honor was his due since his mother, Thetis, a goddess, had a special and favored position with Zeus. He pleaded with his mother to gain Zeus' compliance with his scheme because he reminded her that she alone among all the Gods and Goddesses had saved him from being shackled. From his privileged position, Achilles believes Zeus honors him and that Zeus' justice would sustain him through all his exploits, and this is his pathologos. As a consequence he believed that even with the final collapse and destruction of the Achaean forces that Hector, the son of Priam and defender of Troy, would spare him and break off combat around his black ship.

However, the state of mind of Achilles also includes love, for he confesses that he loves and cares for Briseis so it is not alone the dishonor he experiences with her loss to Agamemnon, but also love.

(3) The Transmission Scene can be recalled, or the family members may retell it, and while those who transmit it are not aware of the implications of the transmission, they do share in the responsibility for transmitting it. In the retelling of those early transmission scenes the speakers often include their own past so that it is possible to trace back a transmission through many generations as we learn through Lord Phoenix. During the transmission scenes, or the retelling of them, the players must appear sincere, caring, strong, resolute, and, most importantly, different from the way they normally function, the milieu appearance. In sharing their basic beliefs, they appear their noblest and most sincere so that the picture they present of themselves is being just. Seeing those we love sharing with us what they love and what they have learned about life we believe the truth of what they say and we are converted to their beliefs.

It might be argued that the role of the gods in Homer plays a vital role in framing the mind set of his characters, including Achilles. However, in the pathologos transmission the event, or the circumstances of the transmission, are only the conditions for the emergence of the problem and not its cause. It is not

the event, no matter how traumatic it might be, that shapes the mind set, or self-image, but it is how each person interprets the meaning of the event. While it is something not uttered it lives with a power that feeds off this pathologos.

Even though Homer does not provide the reader with Achilles' reflections on early transmission scenes that shaped his self image, we find Lord Phoenix recalls his surrogate mother-nurse and mentor role in his visit of the emissaries to the tent of Achilles.

“Now, it was I  
who formed your manhood, handsome as a god's,  
Akhilleus: I who loved you from the heart;  
for never in another's company  
would you attend a feast or dine in hall--  
never, unless I took you on my knees  
and cut your meat, and held your cup of wine.  
Many a time you wet my shirt, hiccuping  
wine-bubbles in distress, when you were small.” pp 218-9

And, in reminding Achilles of these roles he reveals that he sought to make Achilles his own since he was unable to father children of his own.

“Patient and laborious as a nurse  
I had to be for you, bearing in mind  
that never would the gods bring into being  
any son of mine.” p.219

He recalls that he too was involved in a love triangle and in describing it we find a parallel between each set of key terms which highlight the dramatic side of the pathologos. Consider, as Phoenix, his mother, his father, and the slave girl are to Achilles, his mother, Thetis, Agamemnon, and Briseis. There is a violent struggle over their object of love: (i) Phoenix's father took the slave girl as his object of desire as did Agamemnon take Briseis, (ii) Phoenix's mother persuaded Phoenix to gain her revenge on his father as Achilles' mother, Thetis, persuaded Zeus to gain revenge on Agamemnon, (iii) Phoenix confronts his father and was about to put a sword to him but some god held him back as Achilles confronted Agamemnon and was about to put a sword to him but a goddess, Athena, held him back, (iv) both



Phoenix and Achilles had planned on escaping the conflict, leaving behind their closest companions, one family and friends the others his comrades in war, (v) and Achilles believed he would be rewarded on his return home as Phoenix found his fortune in escaping from the feud with his father.

Clearly, each of these five episodes can be seen to have their parallels and offer models for the drama of Achilles, consistent with the transmission of the pathologos. Phoenix continues with the tale that closely parallels Achilles as he recalls another legionary hero, Meleagros, who like other great men was consumed with anger and refused to do battle. Phoenix concludes urging Achilles to return to battle, reap the rewards, and gain honor before it is too late. He is unaware of the role he played in the formation of Achilles' pathologos as are those who play out similar roles.

“Let no malignant spirit  
turn you that way, dear son! It will be worse  
to fight for ships already set afire!  
Value the gifts; rejoin the war; Akhaians  
afterward will give you a god's honor.  
If you reject the gifts and then, later,  
enter the deadly fight, you will not be  
accorded the same honor, even though  
you turn the tide of war!” p.221

Clearly, Achilles' problem was understood as typical of a certain class of warriors but he went beyond the boundary of what was thought of as acceptable and, so, to them it was unintelligible.

“Until this moment, no one took it ill  
that you should suffer anger; we learned this  
from the old stories of how towering wrath  
could overcome great men; but they were still  
amenable to gifts and to persuasion.” p.220

The great deception that Achilles had planned included sending his friend, Patroclus, to enter into battle disguised in his armor, since he believed that he

would return safely and that the deception would fool Agamemnon into giving back Briseis and the promised reward for his returning to battle.

“Now carry out the purpose I confide,  
so that you'll win great honor for me, and glory  
among Danáans; then they'll send me back  
my lovely girl, with bright new gifts as well.  
Once you expel the enemy from the ships,  
rejoin me here.” p.380

He was confident that he would sail away, deserting Agamemnon, and leaving him to fight Hector's forces alone. In fleeing the confrontation he is like his mentor, Phoenix, and his reasons are as unknown to him as with Phoenix.

(4) The need to face the consequences of the pathologos problem brings an end to the problem, and with it the recognition that we must bring a reconciliation of our ideals with the life we live. In accepting the responsibility that since the deeds done had sprung from oneself, and that the driving force behind the pathologos was one's own false belief, the pathologos can end. Returning to those that were responsible for the transmission of the pathologos, facing them, or their surrogates, and explaining the reasons for rejecting the false belief severs the bond that kept the pathologos in place. Clearly, Achilles, after mourning the death of Patroclus, confronts his mother and shares his understanding that any honor he has received through her is without benefit:

"Mother, yes, the master  
of high Olympus brought it all about,  
but how have I benefited? My greatest friend  
is gone: Patróklos, comrade in arms, whom I  
held dear above all others -- dear as myself --  
now gone, lost; Hektor cut him down, despoiled him  
of my own arms, massive and fine, a wonder  
in all men's eyes. The gods gave them to Pêleus  
that day they put you in a mortal's bed--  
how I wish the immortals of the sea  
had been your only consorts! How I wish  
Pêleus had taken a mortal queen! Sorrow

immeasurable is in store for you as well,  
when your own child is lost: never again  
on his homecoming day will you embrace him!" p.438

Before the anagogic level unfolds for Achilles he must turn his inner mind around and free himself of what had previously possessed him. This is the condition for the upward path, since to be receptive to the higher presupposes one has clearly seen the tragic consequences of one's decisions and must reject it all. Listening now to the voice of his heart Achilles can say,

"I must reject this life, my heart tells me,  
reject the world of men." p.438

He recognizes the futility of his pathologos dominated life, which now seems hollow and empty of meaning,

"Here I sat,  
my weight a useless burden to the earth," p.438

In this psychic act he reflects back on his former mode of existence and, like all those who come to reject their pathologos, he admits he had enjoyed a part of that desperate, problematic life, saying

"with anger that envenoms even the wise  
and is far sweeter than slow-dripping honey,  
clouding the hearts of men like smoke.." p.439

Those who are able to take this step are open to accepting their destiny in whatever form it may take. Held back no longer by his pathologos he is free to "win my perfect glory" (p.439). Now, without reservation, he can say "it is all past, and I have quelled my passion as I must." He thereby becomes receptive to the anagogic stage of our existence. Through the agency of the Goddess Athena, "she bound his head with Golden Cloud, and made his very body blaze with fiery light", and the luminosity reaches far and wide, "the baleful radiance from Akhilleus lit the sky." He accepts this transfiguration and is showered with divine radiance. Thus the transfiguration of divine radiance extends from Achilles and

blazes forth and illuminates even the sun-filled day. This luminous light of Being, in Plato, begets mind and truth as it awakens in Achilles a mindfulness beyond the confines of those about him.

After gaining new armor from Hephaestus' workshop Achilles still experiences his anger and is eager for the joys of battle, but Thetis urges him to tell his troops his anger against Agamemnon is over. He calls the troops together and announces that he has dropped his anger. Agamemnon also ends his anger and offers many more treasures to Achilles over his return, but Achilles is no longer concerned with whether he receives them or not.

“Lord Marshal Agamemnon, make the gifts  
if you are keen to - gifts are due; or keep them.  
It is for you to say.”

No thought of fleeing, confronting his problem, he returns to face his challenge. He re-enters the war and slays Hector, regaining his honor, and in slaying Hector he knows death soon awaits him.

“Die, make an end. I shall accept my own  
whenever Zeus and the other gods desire.”

The goal is won, success is achieved, but the story goes on because there is something more important that is still undone.

(5) Victory is not enough, one must return to the everyday world and show that it is possible to function independently of the pathologos-driven anger. The reconciliation is yet to be achieved. One never knows if the problem has emptied itself until the return because it brings together whatever fragments were denied and hidden from view. Homer draws attention to these missing pieces in the penultimate chapter through Achilles commemorating the funeral of Patroclus. In contrasting the conflict in war with the competition in the games, we are able to see Achilles masterful of both realms. In the games, a world separate from the bitter competition in life and the terrible conflicts in war. In games, we play and compete for honor fairly and justly; in games, we consecrate our efforts to achieve excellence to the divine, and before the games we honor fallen comrades in war and peace. Thus, through games we commemorate what we judge most significant. No longer as warriors but as men, they compete with one another. Each game has its

own boundary, its own rules of fairness, and if there is question of an outcome, we abide by the decisions of impartial judges. Within this world the sportsman displays his excellence in skill, strategy, courage, cool-headedness, and determination to win while, in contrast, war has only that one final and complete standard, victory or defeat.

Achilles announces the games will honor Patroclus, that he will be the judge, and will offer as prizes the treasures he had taken from his past spoils of war, thus, demonstrating that he honors truth and excellence in the games he shows the noble qualities of what it is to be a man.

The Achaeans applaud and show their own sense of *arête* during the games. As judge he also functions to quell rising antagonism among betting spectators,

“Aias got up at once  
in hot anger, to make a rough reply,  
and more and louder bickering was in prospect,  
had not Achilles towered up and said:  
No more of this, no railing back and forth,  
Aias, I donmeneus! Not on this occasion!  
If some else behaved so, you'd resent it.”

and in adjudicating a conflict between Antilokhos and Eumelos, clearheaded Achilles over awarding prizes when guile rather than skill succeeded,

“Wait a bit, sir.  
Surely I'm younger far than you, My lord  
Meneláos; you stand higher in age and rank.  
You know a young man may go out of bounds:  
His wits are nimble, but his judgment slight.  
Be patient, then.”

The Achaeans themselves call off a vicious wrestling match to avoid serious injuries and Achilles in agreement awards each of the contestants equal prizes

“Break off this duel, and pick up equal prizes.”,

and in a forthcoming contest between Meríones and Lord Marshal Agamemnon, between rank and superior skill, he avoids the inequality and calls for a draw, offering both prizes. No trace of the pathologos anger is directed at Agamemnon.

“Son of Atreus,  
considering that you excel us all -  
and by so much--in throwing power, I'd say  
that you should simply carry off this prize.  
We'll give the spear, though, to Meríones,  
If you agree. That is what I propose.”

Clearly, Achilles demonstrates a sense of justice, clear-headedness, and in front of all the warriors shows respect and in adding that Agamemnon excels all of them he acknowledges what before was impossible for him.

The deeper level of the pathologos of Achilles' revenge is finally unmasked showing the deep and powerful presence of pain, sorrow, and suffering that lies behind those caught in the web of the pathologos. When Priam goes to Achilles to plead for his dead son's body he reminds Achilles of his aged father, Pêleus, and that this long war with Troy has left his father, Pêleus, vulnerable to war and to ruin.

“Remember your own father,  
Akhilleus, in your godlike youth: his years  
like mine are many, and he stands upon  
the fearful doorstep of old age. He, too,  
is hard pressed, it may be, by those around him,  
there being no one able to defend him  
from bain of war and ruin. Ah, but he  
may nonetheless hear news of you alive,  
and so with glad heart hope through all his days  
for sight of his dear son, come back from Troy,  
while I have deathly fortune.” Page 583

For having recalled the toll his plight has taken on all of Priam's 50 sons, he again asks Achilles “to remember your own father”.

The words of Priam awoke a deep longing and grief that Achilles had ignored and as he recalled he wept for his father, for he knew too that his own death was to follow soon after his slaying of Hector and that it would add to his father's grief,

“Now in Akhilleus  
the evocation of his father stirred  
new longing, and an ache of grief. He lifted  
the old man's hand and gently put him by.  
Then both were overborne as they remembered:  
the old king huddled at Akhilleus' feet  
wept, and wept for Hektor, killer of men,  
While great Akhilleus wept for his own father  
As for Patróklus once again; and sobbing filled the room.” p.584

His emotions now calmed, he could relate to Priam humanly, and face the full consequences of his pathologos on himself and upon others.

“But when Akhilleus' heart  
had known the luxury of tears, and pain  
within his breast and bones had passed away,”

Achilles invites Priam to sit with him and he shares with Priam that

“the gods ordained the destiny of men,  
to bear such burdens in our lives, while they  
feel no affliction” p.585

Homer concludes the drama of Achilles that began with Achilles loss of Briseis had ended with their union

“...Achilles slept  
deep in his palisaded lodge. Beside him,  
lovely in her youth, Brisêis lay.” p.589

Between that beginning and end of Achilles' ruinous age we learn how he surfaced his problem, courageously dealt with it, and found what it was to achieve excellence in a heroic life of the warrior and as a man. Further, in Homer's *The Odyssey* as we are told by Alkinoos, Lord and Model for all the Phaiakia, that the Trojan war was Gods' work,

“so that it should make a song for men to come”

and so now in singing it once again we can more deeply appreciate the profound insight that Homer displays in his understanding of the struggle to achieve human excellence. Homer depicts the greatest warrior. Indeed, Achilles was able to break through his problem, he did not have to escape and flee to avoid a conflict, in his victory over Hector he triumphed, and become a legend to inspire others. His victory over Hector brought him to another test, a test to be human, to be just and honorable in your dealings with your fellow man, and to find in one's love a longed for union. In this union he becomes more than a warrior, he becomes a man of excellence.

“It lives to keep all men in mind of honor  
forever, Achilles.”

In Homer's contrasting work, *The Odyssey*, he explores the range of prophecy and offers insights into the most noble of women, Penelope. We can see the way Homer makes this comparison within the *Odyssey* as we share with Agamemnon his insight that as men sing about Achilles' honor, the gods sing in praise of Penelope.

"The very gods themselves will sing her story  
for men on earth -mistress of her own heart, Penelope."

These two works of Homer inspired an age and can still bring us to reflect upon what it is to be Man, either as a man or a woman.

As a result of this study of Homer's *Iliad* we found in Homer what we had ignored in our own practice of philosophical midwifery. We now include the need for subjects to attempt reconciliation with those who have suffered grief through the enactment of one's problem. The natural consequences of entering into philosophical midwifery brings one to reflect and wonder about one's struggle with



one's fate, whether or not we have a destiny to fulfill, and if we become a part of an intelligible and caring cosmos by being a Man.

The implications of being able to justify this thesis for philosophy and culture are obvious since the legitimacy of the idea of progress and the presumed superiority of modern thought over the classical Hellenic tradition can no longer be taken for granted. There should be nothing strange or surprising in the philosophical claim that the mind can purify itself of its own fictions, or false beliefs, since the mind is capable of both understanding its own functions and of knowing itself. A philosophy that reaches to the furthestmost reach of the mind and draws from its own noetic experiences the premises that become the building blocks of its philosophy and metaphysics can attest to the intelligible nature of mind. For, to show the intelligible nature of the mind through confirming experiences and, so, verify for themselves that the life of the mind has no equal restores once and for all the meaningfulness of the Hellenic vision of philosophy.

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